



MEDIA RELEASE

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China finds PH not only 'More Fun', but also 'Most Romantic'

Fresh from winning the *Best Tourist Destination* award from *Oriental Morning Post*, the Philippines is cited anew as *The Most Romantic Destination* by another media group, *Shanghai Morning Post*. Both awards come from two of the most important news dailies in Shanghai, Mainland China.

This achievement puts the country on the elite list of *Shanghai Morning Post* based on a unique set of categories and results polled from consumer surveys through *sh.qq.com* (China's main social messaging system and local version of MSN/ Yahoo! Messenger) and cut-out reader survey forms featured on *Shanghai Morning Post*. The editorial team voted to complete the select roster of country winners, which also included Australia (best tour destination for discovery), Switzerland (best shopping destination), Korea (best skiing destination), New Zealand (best destination for self-driving tour), and Germany (best destination for art appreciation).

Attended by luminaries from both the Shanghai travel trade and media groups, the *Shanghai Morning Post's* annual Tourism Awards was held at the Peninsula Hotel by the Bund last 15 January 2013. Consul General Charles Jose received the award for the country along with Tourism Attache Gerardo Panga and Niel Ballesteros of the Department of Tourism (DOT) Office in Shanghai.

The Philippines was previously awarded as one of the best tourist destinations for Chinese in a consumer market survey conducted by the *Oriental Morning Post*, together with other countries in the same category such as Korea, Singapore, Ireland, Finland, and Dubai. The *World Travel-Special Trip Awards*, a grand awards night sponsored by the news daily, was held last 9 January 2013 at the Twelve at Hengshan, a luxury collection hotel in Shanghai.

Tourism Secretary Ramon R. Jimenez, Jr. led a top-level delegation from the Philippines and sat in an exclusive meeting with his counterparts from the China

National Tourism Administration (CNTA) on the sideline of the China International Travel Mart (CITM) 2012. Held in Shanghai last 14 November 2012, the meeting reiterated the commitments of both tourism governments to cooperate and push mutual travel exchange, which is expected to produce two million inbound tourists (two-way tourist traffic) by 2016.

Following the DOT-CNTA meeting and initial lifting of China's ban on group travel to Philippines in mid-October 2012, Airphil Express re-launched its charter flight service from Shanghai to Kalibo on 30 November 2012. Zest Air followed suit by increasing its regular flight frequency from Shanghai to Manila in December 2012. Both Cebu Pacific and Zest Air also opened their direct flight services from Shanghai to Kalibo last 11 January 2013. The enhanced Philippine-China air access will include other routes: Beijing-Kalibo (Jan. 15), Hangzhou-Kalibo (Jan. 17), Guangzhou-Cebu (Jan. 24), Chengdu-Kalibo (Feb. 05), and Shanghai-Cebu (Feb. 08).

The increasing demand for short-haul beach holiday trips among Chinese tourists firmly positions the Philippines as one of the must-visit countries in Southeast Asia, especially this peak winter season and upcoming Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday on 9 - 17 February 2013. Other special flights are to be operated to cater to the growing demand from Chinese outbound travelers who mainly go for sightseeing (nature trips), cultural experience, shopping, beach holidays, leisure, and entertainment.

China continues to be in the top five source markets of the Philippines, producing 250,883 visitors or 5.87% of the total visitor volume in 2012. The DOT maintains offices in Shanghai and Beijing to effectively service the travel needs and capture a greater share of Asia's largest outbound market. China is projected to be the world's largest source of outbound travelers with 70.3 million trips made in 2011, an increase of more than 20% compared to 2010.

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